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attack. He has the ideology, the operational capacity, and he gets everything he needs off the Internet. And then he goes out and perpetrates an attack."

At the same time, Scharia reveals, the CTED started receiving intelligence reports about another Jihadist phenomenon dubbed KFR – kidnapping for ransom. Islamic State and a series of other global Jihad groups were basing a large part of their financing on the kidnapping of foreign nationals, and the knowledge that their governments, the companies that employ them or their families would pay the ransom in secret.

"Where's the tough dilemma here? If you pay, you're in fact encouraging others to do the same. If you don't pay, like the US and British governments have decided, you expose your citizens to beheading ceremonies," Scharia says. "The fact is, for example, the Americans and the British are the ones who've been killed, while others have managed to be released. The world hasn't been able to consolidate an international norm because of the gravity of the moral arguments that each side brings to the table. There are countries that say we won't abandon our citizens. There are countries that say if you don't abandon them, you'll be encouraging others to do the same. It's the classic prisoner dilemma. If everyone were to really decide not to pay and adhere to this decision, then it would be effective; but it's enough for just one to pay for the kidnappings to continue.

"And above all, what do you say to families in a situation in which you've decided not to cooperate? And suppose the family says: Okay, the state doesn't want to pay. We'll pay for my brother, my son, my husband who is in Islamic State's prison cell. How do you treat these families? Do you indict them? After all, they're clearly acting against the decision. This is undoubtedly a particularly tough moral dilemma.

"According to UN estimates, in the Maghreb alone, al-Qaida has earned $200 million from kidnappings. This is a huge amount for financing terror. The material in our possession points also to an entire industry of cunning mediators that has developed alongside the kidnappings, people who have realized they can make easy money from these terrible acts."

But even when the news of these kidnappings – and the ones carried out subsequently by Islamic State – began to trickle through, the world still failed to wake up. According to Scharia, the international community's attitude towards Islamic State changed only in the wake of the reports about the massacre of the Yazidis and the invasion of Iraq.

"The information that came into the UN was clear – we're dealing with deliberate, systematic and terrible genocide," Scharia says. "Another thing that changed the perception of the threat was the fact that they were on their way to conquering Iraq. For as long as they were operating only in Syria, Islamic State was perceived as just another player in the civil war there. But their extremely rapid occupation of parts of Iraq and the collapse of the military there suddenly turned on warning lights in the world's capitals and at UN headquarters in New York."

Why do we in the West hear so much about Islamic State and far less about Boko Haram or other equally dangerous Jihadist organizations?

"Over and above the issues of the kidnappings and the foreign terrorist fighters, Islamic State is an organization that for the first time has effective control over a territory – not in remote Afghanistan, but in the heart of the Middle East, an hour's flight from Europe. There's also the matter of the economic base: It's true that terrorist organizations have financed themselves with big money in the past as well, but here we're dealing with sums on a completely different scale, revenues that amount to the Gross National Product of a country, from oil, from kidnappings, from taxes they exact from the local population, from looting and human trafficking,"

Scharia says experts worldwide are currently trying to figure out why young Muslims from all across the globe are traveling thousands of kilometers to fight in a Middle Eastern Jihad. His answers are

surprising. The research, he notes, "is focusing on the social and psychological aspects of the phenomenon. These studies show that religion is not a key component of the recruitment, and that a large portion of the recruits didn't undergo a process of religious radicalization before deciding to join up."

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If religion isn't the reason, then what is?

"The combination of an inability and unwillingness to integrate into the Western world is giving rise to a sense of alienation, rejection, anger and hatred among young people. These feelings are being exploited by Islamic State's extraordinarily effective recruitment machine. They are offering these young people a world of meaning, content and purpose far greater than anything they have known until now. Instead of being a car mechanic or engineer in an office, come be a part of us, of a story that is in fact far greater than anything you have encountered until now.

"Islamic State has been particularly successful in places where it has created a social environment (real or virtual) in which young people have been able to rouse one another with the power of the story and enlist new recruits. Every salesperson knows that recruitment by means of 'a friend brings a friend' is highly effective, and Islamic State uses this method in an extremely effective manner.

"The most interesting psychological study I have encountered to date is one by Professor Arie Kruglanski of the University of Maryland. He interviewed hundreds of young people who went through the entire radicalization route, including terror attacks in different arenas, from Saudi Arabia and through to Sri Lanka and the Philippines. He is also convinced that the secret to Islamic State's charm is not religion. He claims the motives that lead young people to Islamic State are a search for meaning and solidarity with the organization's great historical story. But Prof. Kruglanski highlights another aspect that doesn't get a mention in the media at all – and that's the sexual aspect."

Sexual?

"Yes. According to him, a part of Islamic State's success stems from the fact that it manages to tap into the aggression these young people develop by means of a series of sexual temptations. The promise of sexual gratifications has always been a part of recruiting candidates for terror. Islamic State promises an escape for the pent-up sexual violence among these young people – and not only in the hereafter, but in this world too. I know it sounds terrible, but if we want to deal with this phenomenon, we need to understand its true source. And its true source is not religious, but social and psychological. Religion gives the young people legitimacy to explain to themselves and their surroundings why they have chosen this path, but it is not the real motive.

"By the way, searches of the belongings of terrorists show that some took along to Syria a well-known book called Islam for Dummies. Reading the guide on the way to Syria allows them to integrate into the religious community there, but it also reinforces what we already know – that religion is only the justification, the framework, but it isn't the real motive."

Islamic State. 'Extraordinarily effective recruitment machine.' (Photo: MCT)

Awful wave

The Maghreb region, very vulnerable to terrorism, is at the center of the CTED operations. "If before the

Arab Spring and the revolutions there," Scharia says, "these countries employed harsh methods in the fight against terror that sometimes worked and sometimes didn't – but were certainly inherently undemocratic methods, today we want to teach them on the one hand to preserve the rules of democracy, and still be able, on the other hand, to deal with the threat. Israel has been subjected to

against terrorism by means of the UN, and that's why we just held a joint Israel-UN conference on law and terror for the first time in Israel.

"People may say that I am of this opinion because I work at the UN. But I truly know that the UN is dealing with so many issues today – poverty and disease, research, nuclear supervision, education, rescue and, of course, terrorism. Who is dealing today with Ebola in Africa if not the UN? Who is taking care of polio inoculations for the children of Syria if not the UN? UN personnel are doing so – and often, at with risk to their own lives."

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terror for more than half a century, but the terror does not constitute a threat to the existence of the state. There, it could lead to the end of a state's existence in its present form."

Scharia offers Morocco as an example. "According to Moroccan law, anyone who wants to be an imam, for example, is required to undergo certification, which includes, among other things, certification in education towards tolerance. If an imam at a mosque in Morocco preaches overly radical messages, his license as an imam is revoked. Today, Morocco is exporting its imam training methods to other countries, like Mali and Chad. They have courses there on how to train imams without undermining freedom of religion, but in a manner that will help them to understand that mosques cannot be used as a hotbed for violent ideology."

What, for example, is the most difficult thing to teach the new democracies?

"For example, teaching investigators that sophisticated interrogation methods are better than the use of hands; that sometimes you'll get to the wrong answer, the wrong information by laying your hands on someone. But if you use other methods, you'll get information that is much better for you. Teaching prosecutors how to conduct a trial using intelligence material, for example, but without hiding everything behind your back such that the defendant and the public feel that the trial was a sham. Explaining to prosecutors and judges that it's in their interests for the defendant and his community to understand that the trial is a just one; because if the community thinks that the trial is a sham, then it doesn't matter how long you jail the man for, you'll have dozens more willing to follow in his footsteps."

Scharia doesn't hide his criticism of Israel. "In the field of countering violent extremism and incitement, I think Israel is trailing far behind. I was shocked to hear the secretary-general of Bnei Akiva, the youth movement from which I emerged and on whose knees I was raised, say things that sounded like a call for revenge after the murder of three teenagers in June. As I see it, he doesn't understand the danger. I'm not drawing a direct link between his words and the murder of the Arab youth; but in my opinion, the secretary-general of a youth movement that says things like that should find himself in the job queue the following morning.

"If the movement itself fails to act, the state needs to have the tools to intervene and say you cannot say such things; because if you do, and even though you don't mean for someone to go out the next day and take action, there's always the possibility that in such a large group there will be someone who because of his unique psychological and personal background will take in your words and say 'I'll go out and do something' – particularly when you are taking about the youth."

Israeli society is now experiencing a wave of racism.

"It's an awful wave, which must be denounced by all leaders of society. Anyone who thinks that through incitement against Arabs or their exclusion from Israeli society, we can reduce the threat of terrorism even in the slightest doesn't understand a thing about terrorism. The most recent studies in the field show a clear link between a failure to integrate and feel a part of society and the willingness of individuals to participate in acts of terror against it. The inability to realize one's personal potential and a sense of persecution and discrimination are constantly being exploited by the terror groups in their efforts to recruit young people.

"President Reuven Rivlin is doing sacred work in countering these violent messages and in promoting tolerance but such counter messages must come from all leaders of vulnerable communities, and especially from those who these individuals listen to."

There are many Israelis who will read this interview and say: All well and good, but why has an Israeli gone to work for an organization that is perceived as so anti-Israel?

"Look, I know that for Israelis, the UN is considered the body that specializes in anti-Israel condemnations; it's natural and understandable. But it's a mistake to view all of the UN's dealing with Israel only through these resolutions. The UN is an organization that is tenfold more complex and large, and the Human Rights Council, with which Israel has a particularly problematic relationship, is only one of several entities. Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also understands the importance of the fight

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